



## Early Journal Content on JSTOR, Free to Anyone in the World

This article is one of nearly 500,000 scholarly works digitized and made freely available to everyone in the world by JSTOR.

Known as the Early Journal Content, this set of works include research articles, news, letters, and other writings published in more than 200 of the oldest leading academic journals. The works date from the mid-seventeenth to the early twentieth centuries.

We encourage people to read and share the Early Journal Content openly and to tell others that this resource exists. People may post this content online or redistribute in any way for non-commercial purposes.

Read more about Early Journal Content at <http://about.jstor.org/participate-jstor/individuals/early-journal-content>.

JSTOR is a digital library of academic journals, books, and primary source objects. JSTOR helps people discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content through a powerful research and teaching platform, and preserves this content for future generations. JSTOR is part of ITHAKA, a not-for-profit organization that also includes Ithaka S+R and Portico. For more information about JSTOR, please contact [support@jstor.org](mailto:support@jstor.org).

---

**THE PLACE OF THE THEOLOGICAL SEMINARY IN A  
UNIFIED PROGRAM OF CHRISTIAN EDUCATION**

O. D. FOSTER

A unified program of Christian Education carries the true consistent Christian instruction, interpretative practice and point of view through the entire educational system, beginning with the cradle roll and continuing on through the graduate schools, providing adequate discipline and training to enable the student to cope successfully with the challenge of the modern world in the various fields of human need. If this proposed definition be permitted as a working hypothesis or test, the present practice in Religious education when poured into such a pragmatic crucible, is readily seen to be lacking in homogeneity and continuity of the fundamental and constituent elements. These elements are neither organized by system, fused by singleness of approach in practice, nor adequate to equip the student with all he needs most.

In this study, it must be assumed that there is such a thing as *Christian* education, yet to attempt to define the term *Christian* would mean processes of analysis too delicate and searching to admit of practical results. Each then will put his own construction upon the proper adjective *Christian*, wherever it is used in this paper, granting at the same time the same privileges to others. Obviously a very wide range of opinion obtains relative to the exact meaning of the word. The emphasis therefore will be placed upon discussing the situation relative to the *unified program*.

Unification of program is elliptical in character, revolving about the two foci—organization and spirit, or point of view. The processes of mechanical organization may be essential, but however perfectly they may have been wrought out, unification is impossible without continuity and consistency in point of view. Neither is complete without the other. They are indispensable complements of each other. But just how to combine them into a unity in a given case, or rather in a great program is sufficient to tax the wisdom of the gods.

Anything so comprehensive as a program of Education aspiring to unity, seems to presuppose thorough-going organization machinery, whether it be for a single church or for *the*

*Church.* It would appear therefore that a given institution, as for example the Theological Seminary, to be most vitally related to the program as a whole, should be an integral organic part of the entire system. Particularly would this be true of the denominational seminary. Yet a survey of the field shows that many of the schools can make but little claim to such relationship. It is to be expected that those under denominational control are articulated organically into the denominational system of education. In no few instances, however, are these quite as distinct and apart from the other educational institutions and agencies of the denomination as if they sustained no relationship to it whatever. Many are in the control of a self-perpetuating body, though, while these men are members of the Church, they are not responsible to it collectively. This means that the leadership of such seminaries at least is virtually the controlling factor and as such determines the particular relation of the institution to other branches of the denominational program of education. While the school is ostensibly under denominational direction it is in reality quite independent. So long as practically all gradations of denominational control over the seminaries may be found in a given communion, unification of program is hardly to be expected. Moreover, the tendency is more and more toward independence of church control. This, therefore, complicates the problem of unification even within denominations until it becomes bewildering to say the least.

*Organic Relation to Other Denominational Educational Institutions.*—On the whole the denominational seminaries have come into existence not as a result of a survey of the field by an authorized representative body or committee of the denomination in search of the most strategic place to locate a school to meet a felt need and to round out the denominational program of education, but for reasons unrelated to the entire denomination. While these schools have rendered valuable service and have accomplished the purpose of their day they have not advanced the interests of a unified program as they might have done had they been given more denominational oversight and related more closely to the entire program and needs of the Church. Geographically therefore many of the seminaries are

poorly located, as regards other seminaries, educational institutions, churches and strategic fields. An example may be cited of a seminary whose denomination is quite exclusively rural, being located in the heart of a great metropolis, whereas another denomination, though quite as largely urban, is located in a very small village. One of the major denominations has one-half of its seminaries east of the Hudson River.

What relation does the seminary bear to the colleges of its denomination? On the whole it has very little, either by organization or affiliation. Exceptions of course occur, chiefly in the case of colleges having seminaries connected therewith. Generally speaking, the seminaries and colleges have been established independently and in this way they have been content to continue. Many seminaries have sought to draw their students from numerous colleges and sections of the country and have not courted a particularly close relationship with any single college. This has worked to the advantage and disadvantage of both, but chiefly the latter. The highly-endowed seminary, though denominational in character, is often quite independent, and as such has sought to dictate what the student should take rather than to confer with the colleges as to how they might articulate their curricula into each other to their mutual advantage. Comparatively few colleges bear much trace of the seminary's having made any serious attempt to shape the curriculum in the interests of those who would enter the seminary. Naturally the colleges having seminaries connected with them have selected their courses somewhat accordingly. But these are few and far between.

The Denominational Academy scarcely knows that the Seminary exists, although a large per cent of the decisions for life work are made this early in life. In the State Universities, Normal Schools, public High Schools and Grammar Schools the Seminaries are unknown. That is where the masses of possibilities for recruits for the Seminaries are, but their names are not mentioned except by an occasional "recruiter."

In a paper of this length one dare not venture to define the relation of the Seminary to the various denominational organizations, or even to suggest how the Seminary serves and is served by the Educational Board, the Board of Home Missions, the

Board of Foreign Missions, the Sunday School Society, the Young People's Society, etc. Naturally, this varies greatly with the different denominations, but in few, if any, do we find the program of the seminary articulating into all of these agencies in a well-rounded-out, unified plan.

#### ORGANIC RELATION OF INTERDENOMINATIONAL SEMINARIES TO OTHER INSTITUTIONS.

The independent seminaries obviously are not organically related to the denominational educational agencies. They have their existence separate and apart and sustain mutual relationship, only as they have been historically affiliated with certain communions. Suffice it to say then that so far as the present system of organization is concerned, the independent seminary has but a small place, if any, in a unified program of Christian Education.

#### UNIFICATION IN SPIRIT OF DENOMINATIONAL SEMINARIES.

Naturally one would expect to find the seminaries of a given denomination to be one in spirit or point of view. Yet this is not often the case. Within a single communion may appear schools of the opposite poles, as far as theological thinking is concerned, ranging from the most ultra conservative, to the most radically liberal. Still other schools of the same denomination may represent all opinions possible to be found between these extremes. A few denominations have succeeded in maintaining a semblance of uniformity within their schools.

The denominational colleges, on the whole, follow the lead of the great university as concerns point of view. The result is that those seminaries which adhere to a point of view, not in keeping with these colleges, are very much out of joint with them, even though both seminary and colleges be under the control of the same denomination. The student after spending eight years in high school and college is much disturbed, if not fatally upset, when he is taught, in some seminaries, that he must champion a view entirely contradictory to that which he had assumed to be true. Instead of unification in the denominational educational program he discovers contradiction; and as a result he faces a serious crisis. Therefore, where we might expect to find unity we may also find diversity.

## UNIFICATION IN SPIRIT OF INDEPENDENT SEMINARIES.

At first sight it might appear that the interdenominational seminary would have a still smaller place in a unified program of education. Denominationally this seems obvious. But so far as the broader view is concerned, it has a still more vital place. While a unified program is desirable within denominations it is just as desirable between denominations, and it is at this point that the interdenominational school has a unique contribution to make. In this class of schools we choose to put (1) those interdenominational by organization, and (2) those interdenominational by service and practice. These schools draw from a wide range of communions and present a similar point of view. They pour a continuous stream of unifying influence into many communions. While they are not organically related in any unifying program, they are engendering spirit which tends to make such a process possible. If unification in practice ever comes, it will be the product of unification of spirit. In these interdenominational schools personal acquaintances are made among faculty and students with men of other persuasions who are seeking truth, discussing frankly and dispassionately every conceivable difference as to doctrine, point of view; method, organization, etc. For the time they have forgotten their denominational affiliations and are comrades in study; they learn to love their colleagues, respect their opinions, see the good in their views and recognize the weaknesses in their own.

These seminaries, while not organically related to the great colleges and universities, do usually carry forward consistently the point of view and method taught therein. In this respect the interdenominational seminary may be more vitally connected with the great institutions of learning than many of the seminaries are with the colleges of their own denomination. However closely organized the institutions may be, if the seminary does not continue the point of view presented in the college, there is no unification in actual practice. The danger of becoming "colorless" in this type of seminary is fully equalled by the peril of becoming bigoted in the strictly denominational school. To the question asked relative to courses being offered to produce the proper appreciation of other communions, many of the latter type of institutions showed only contempt. To such, de-

nominal unification is difficult and interdenominational unification practically impossible. Only in proportion, therefore, that the denominational seminary has imbibed the more catholic spirit may hope be cherished for its participation in a broader unified program. Those praying for this broader catholicity rejoice at the work being done in the great universities in the way of providing broad liberal backgrounds for the flood of leaders there in training. The Union Schools of Religion, destined to appear at the State Universities, will be of further service in this direction. This will also serve as feeders for the seminaries of the broader type.

The program of Christian education offered by a particular communion should be comprehensive and consistent. It is to be hoped that the interchurch program may some day be so characterized. That is, that from the home through the Seminary there may be a continuity of plan and point of view. With the place of the Seminary properly mentioned and its work adequately articulated in the different institutions through which the students pass on their educational career, a new day will come for the schools of the prophets.

The third and last part of our tentative definition assumes that a Unified Program of Christian Education must be adequate for the needs of today. Our study has not revealed the existence of a unified program, nor has it given evidence of the adequacy of the forces now in the field to meet the situation. In number the seminaries are adequate, but in adaptability and efficiency, many of them cannot, under present conditions, measure up to the pressing needs of the hour.

A study made last Fall of 96 seminaries showed a total attendance of 5,299 students, or an average of 55. But this average is brought up by the large schools. Many of them have but few matriculants. The combined classes of certain seminaries claiming affiliation with a single denomination would make but one class of respectable proportions. The maintenance of several plants and faculties to produce results which could be better accomplished by combining them, assuming the present system is continued, not only makes efficiency difficult, but also lays unnecessary taxes on the Church for funds which are needed vastly more for other purposes in our great universities, where

myriads of our young people actually are in need of religious instructors. The dire need in the seminary world is qualitative not quantitative. This is in no way meant as a sweeping criticism of the many splendid institutions, but as a statement of fact covering no small number of schools which are not and cannot possibly cope with the complex needs of modern life.

Perhaps the most pressing need in such an exigency is concentration through coordination and specialization. The rule has been that the seminary, however poorly equipped, has assumed to provide the student with just what he needed, regardless of the particular work he intended to undertake. Like the old-time physician, who, though without special skill as diagnostician, could treat all maladies equally well—from cancer to corns—most of them have taken, and what is yet worse, still solicit all cases regardless of the particular preparation the student should have to fit him for his life work. One wonders whether such a situation reveals a weakness in ability for diagnosis, or desperation for students, or both. Such schools, however, usually succeed in convincing the student that he has found the *right school*, and in most cases he continues to think so until he has been painfully disillusioned by expensive experience.

The average curriculum, taken from a study of 65 institutions having sent in questionnaires, shows considerable change having taken place in semester hours required in particular subjects from the year 1880 to 1900, with much less change from 1900 to 1918. The appreciable change made between 1880 and 1900 was in the interest of the more practical subjects. One is surprised to find no greater progress having been made during the last two decades.

Yet with the advance of the last twenty years of the 19th century, the average seminary curriculum based upon the above study, shows little evidence of being adequately adapted to the needs of today either in method, subject matter or point of view. The emphasis in subject matter is where it was forty years ago, though not to the same extent. Bible, Church History, Systematic Theology, Greek, and Hebrew hold, in the order enumerated, the field, among the required subjects. This leaves but little time for the "more practical" subjects with almost no provisions for specialization.



It would seem, therefore, that the charge frequently made against the average seminary of being out of joint with the times and thus of not being vitally related to modern life might be sustained. There can be little to hope for by way of betterment until these institutions are brought into some comprehensive system giving place for coordination and specialization.

With all offering practically the same work, emphasizing the older disciplines and leaving almost untouched the subjects of immediate need, the Church will be compelled to limp along with inadequately trained leaders, or force those aspiring to such leadership in "secular" schools to secure their preparation. By setting apart these institutions, chosen because of adaptability of location, etc., to particular purposes, they would be better attended and render a far broader service. While offering general courses for the ministry very few indeed, if any, can, under existing conditions, adequately prepare professional religious workers for specialized work.

There is not a seminary in existence adequately preparing men for the rural ministry, as great and strategically important as this field is. Practically no seminaries are preparing men to be specialists in social service, in Y. M. C. A. secretarial positions, in industrial centers, in city missions, in foreign missions, in religious education, in young people's work, in student centers, etc. As a result, those who are trained in these lines in other schools, often come back into the Church with all too little sympathy for it and its program. Obviously the traditional seminary *cannot* do *all* of these things, but it is just as apparent that *they must be done*. By a thorough reshaping of the system through coordination and specialization, the seminaries *can* do this and at the same time be better attended, and develop stronger specialists who will have national reputation and attract students in larger number.

Unfortunately, in too many cases the scholarship and educational methods of the seminaries are not commensurate with other post graduate schools. This works decidedly to the advantage of some of the Interdenominational Seminaries, Schools of Religion and professional schools. The strong, vigorous thinkers among the student bodies of the colleges and universities are inclined to those institutions which offer the same quality of work they have had in college.

Had the seminary occupied a place in a *unified program* of Christian education, there probably would not have come into existence the Y. M. C. A. Training Schools, Schools of Philanthropy, Teachers' Colleges, (offering higher academic degrees in social and religious education), etc. It takes no seer to predict, unless some such program is worked out for the Seminary, that still other schools will be established to meet the needs of the modern world, thus leaving many of the seminaries in an even less enviable position than they now occupy. Unless this situation is adequately met, there will probably grow up, particularly in our great universities, Union Schools of Religion and Social Service of graduate grade. The need must be met and will be met if the Church is to go forward.

Fortunately, specialization is in process in some of our larger schools. One is delighted to see what is now being accomplished in a few. But these are independent efforts and unrelated only in so far as the spirit and effect may permeate the Church as a whole. Specialization *of* schools is needed even more just now than specialization *within* schools. This will render co-ordination of the whole field possible, with less duplication and expense, but with greater efficiency, and prestige.

Too much praise cannot be given the seminaries for their sacrificial service and for the hard work the members of their faculties have done. In the developing of the Church they have played their part well. However nobly they may have accomplished their task in their day, the time has arrived in the on-going of the Church that another forward step must be taken to keep pace with the times. We have seen that there is no such thing as a unified program of Christian Education. It has been obvious that the seminaries are not unified through any program of organization or through point of view either denominationally or interdenominationally. It is just as clear that they are not adequately preparing an all-round leadership for the Church in its multifarious forms of service demanded today.

One doubts if the Seminaries will, or can, adjust themselves to the situation without aid. It was not an unmixed evil that many did not get their enormous askings in the Interchurch drive for funds, for it would have meant colossal duplication with no system of coordination and specialization—in other

words, with no adequate program to meet the needs of the whole field even after the gigantic investments had been made. In view of these facts, what should be done?

The situation is so intricately complex and confused that one must be content with stating the problem, for to propose its solution would require more audacity than most of us would care to display. Yet the needs of Christendom are so imperative that one feels impelled to suggest the creation of some machinery, which, when set into operation, may find a solution or at least make some progress in the direction of a solution. There might well be appointed, therefore, by this body a Commission to take the whole matter under most serious advisement. The Commission, it seems, should be composed of at least one member from each of the bodies represented in this conference. Each member of the Commission, in turn might well be made chairman of a committee to study the relation of the seminary—denominational and interdenominational—to his own particular organization. For example, the Federal Council of Churches, The Religious Education Association, etc., could each have its committee to study the place of the Seminary in relation to its own program. On the other hand, the Association of Seminary Professors should have an exceptionally strong committee, representing denominational and independent institutions, to study their relation to the entire group of interests.

In addition the Council of Church Boards of Education might well serve as a supplementary correlating agency by appointing its constituent Board secretaries as Chairmen of separate committees composed of their seminary presidents and other denominational secretaries. The Council in this way would become a strong sympathetic coordinating supplement to the larger and more inclusive Commission. With the findings of all these committees in the hands of their respective chairmen, the Commission would be in possession of a wealth of material and a comprehensive understanding of the problem which would make possible the beginning, at least, of an intelligent appreciation of the place the Seminary should occupy in a unified program of Christian Education.